

## **Ten Strategies for Protecting Government's Essential Operating Records**

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Disasters take many forms, from isolated water pipe ruptures and building fires, to wider spread tornadoes and floods, to still wider spread regional events, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Be sure to include **records** in your emergency planning—they're essential to keep government functioning!

1. **Include records in planning.** Make the identification of essential records part of every agency's continuity of operations (COOP) plan.
2. **Identify response records.** What records will you need to respond to a disaster? Think about maps, building plans, infrastructure records, and succession planning records.
3. **Identify essential functions records.** What will you need 24 hours after the disaster to reopen for business? Think about insurance records, accounts receivable, payroll, jail and parole records.
4. **Identify citizen protection records.** What records will your citizens need 24 hours after the disaster in order to protect their health, safety, identity, and rights? Think about medical and property records, identity records (such as birth and marriage), and veterans' records.
5. **Think long term.** What if the disaster lasts a week? A month? A year? What records will you need to continue protecting and serving your constituents?
6. **Locate essential records.** Know where to find essential records in your office. Will you need to evacuate them or are they off site? Essential records may be in your file cabinets, on your desktop, in your In or Out box, in your PC or laptop, or on backup tapes.
7. **Duplicate.** Disasters can strike without warning. The best insurance is to duplicate essential records and store them off site, far from the originals.
8. **Don't forget historical records.** Historical records may not be needed in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, but they are essential for rebuilding community afterward, particularly in widespread disasters such as hurricanes.
9. **Stabilize.** If the worst happens, first responders to a disaster should take simple steps to stabilize records: circulate the air, lower the temperature and humidity. Remember ACDC: Air Circulating, Dry and Cool.
10. **Rescue.** Don't assume damaged records can't be salvaged—no matter how bad things look. Handle wet and fire-damaged records carefully. Freeze wet records to buy time.

Every state has a records and archives management agency that provides assistance on records issues. For more information, visit the Council of State Archivists website,

<http://www.StateArchivists.org/prepare>